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Tennessee School for the Deaf (Knoxville City Hall,  
Old Knoxville City Hall)  
Summit Hill Drive and Broadway  
Knoxville  
Knox County  
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-5

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240



## CITY OF KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

RANDY TYREE, MAYOR

COMMUNITY &amp; ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VIRGIL H. OAVIS, Director

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## KNOXVILLE'S OLD CITY HALL

NAME: Tennessee School for the Deaf; Knoxville, City Hall

LOCATION: Summit Hill Drive and Broadway, Knoxville, Knox County, Tennessee

PRESENT OWNER: City of Knoxville

PRESENT OCCUPANT: Vacant, but will soon be occupied by offices of the Tennessee Valley Authority

PRESENT USE: Office

SIGNIFICANCE: The building complex was originally constructed for the Tennessee School for the Deaf and was occupied by TSD until 1924 when the City of Knoxville purchased the complex for office use. One other major historical use occurred during the Civil War when the buildings were used as a hospital by both the Confederate and Union Armies.

As an architectural complex, the initial building group is one of the few surviving major Greek Revival structures in East Tennessee and the only one in Knoxville. It is an excellent example of Provincial Greek Revival style to which has been added a variety of excellent late 19th Century building units, all carefully organized to create a strong visual harmony in terms of style, planning, massing, material and arrangement. Equally important is the siting of this complex high on a green, wooded knoll, an idyllic site well-suited to the philosophical implications of the Greek Revival Style.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATIONA. Physical History

1. The eight acre site for the school was acquired by gift and purchase under the direction of the Rev. Thomas McIntyre, formerly of the Ohio Deaf and Dumb School. Col. Calvin Morgan donated the initial two acres of land valued at \$1,600 in 1846. An additional three-and-one-half acres adjoining the school grounds were purchased for \$2,000 in 1852. Acquisition was complete in 1858.

In order to facilitate the school's establishment in its own quarters as soon as possible, private funds were used to begin construction of the East wing in 1846. Two (2) years later, in 1848, the cornerstone was laid for the main building. The West wing was begun in 1851.

- 2.3. While mention is made of a "Principal Architect" at the Cornerstone Ceremonies, he is not named. Only the name of the builder, Jacob Newman, has survived. Given the state of the architectural profession at that time, it is possible that he was the designer.
4. The Main Building, with its two wings, remains one of the few surviving major Greek Revival structures in East Tennessee. It is a handsome, though somewhat clumsy, design, with its projecting four-column ionic portico, slightly off-center, and framed by heavy doric order pilastered pavilions at each end. The East and West side walls, now plain, originally had handsome two-story galleries and shuttered windows.

The Main Building is situated on a green, wooded knoll, and its principal pedimented facade has a southern orientation. The two wings are located behind, facing East and West, forming a courtyard in the rear U-shaped space. The siting of the original group of buildings, with their panoramic view, is as dramatic today as it was when originally constructed since all unit expansions were located so as not to infringe on the southern area of the site.

The design and planning intent of the buildings and the original use of their interiors is well described in notes in the McClung Collection of the Knoxville-Knox County Public Library.

5. The first major addition to the building complex was a classroom building constructed in 1874 to accommodate the enlarged enrollment of the School for the Deaf. The architect for this building was A.C. Bruce of Knoxville.

- (cont'd) 5. Bruce practiced architecture in Knoxville from 1872 to 1879 and was noted as a designer of courthouses utilizing the popular Italian Renaissance style. Bruce used the same principles found in his courthouses on the classroom building.

The next addition took place in 1879 with the construction of a Chapel/Auditorium. It was sited at the end of the West wing to balance the previous classroom building. This building was doubled in size in 1904-05, by an addition to the North facade. The addition was designed by Bauman Brothers, a Knoxville firm noted for their Queen Anne Residential and Romanesque Commercial building designs. It is possible, due to the well-related detailing and planning, that the original Chapel was also the work of A.C. Bruce.

The second classroom building, constructed in 1891, closely following the plan and massing of the first, provided spaces for six (6) new classrooms, study halls, a library and museum. The design of the building, which is separate from the other elements, also utilized projecting center pavilions and a low hipped roof, but is more Neo-Classical in its detailing.

The last of the additions that remain is a hospital building constructed in 1899. The new hospital building was located to the West of the Chapel. Set on a low cellar and only two (2) stories high, this building did not have projecting center pavilions or much decorative work.

## B. Historical Context

### 1.12 Use

The Tennessee School for the Deaf occupied the current Knoxville City Hall site for 78 years, from 1846 to 1924. By 1861 the school was one of the largest of its type in the country, having grown from nine in 1845 to eighty in 1857. However, the Civil War intervened, and the buildings were taken over from 1861-1865 by military authorities as a Confederate Army hospital. From 1863 to 1865, the Union Army occupied the buildings, again using them as a hospital. Returned in 1866 to the school, the buildings had been badly damaged, but were finally ready for reopening in December of that year.

In 1918 the school received a sizable tract of land at Island Home in the vicinity of Knoxville. Plans were begun for new school buildings on this site. The downtown campus was sold to the City of Knoxville in 1922 for \$400,000. However, the school was allowed to use the buildings until 1924, when their new campus buildings were ready.

The old structures were rehabilitated in 1924, and city offices moved into units 5 and 6 in February of 1925. One unit, Building 10, became a health center, while the remainder were utilized by the Board of Education for offices and school purposes.

A 1932 proposal saw the entire complex redesigned as the Boyd Junior High School. However, city offices eventually filled and continue to occupy all of the buildings today. It is proposed, however, that city offices begin to move into the new City-County Building early in 1980, leaving the old buildings available for some other function.

Offers for the City Hall site were made in 1953 and 1958, as a site for a new department store. This action would have resulted in demolition of all of the structures. A number of structures were, in any case, demolished to provide a large parking lot on the northern half of the site for city employees. Other use changes have resulted in a nibbling away of the original 8-acre site. A fire and the subsequent demolition of the Small Boys' Cottage (1) spurred the development of Summit Hill Drive across the southeast corner of the property in 1975. A similar improvement of traffic flow altered the southwest corner slightly a number of years ago, and a current improvement proposal may take additional property.

A major land use change occurred in 1978. The original tract was cut nearly in half, and the northern section is now the Summit Towers housing for the elderly, due to be completed early in 1980. The next future change will be for the rehabilitation and re-use of the remaining original buildings on the southern half of the site.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. Exterior:

This building is Greek Revival in style, having a main section of 50 x 100 feet and three stories, facing South. Two (2) wings of 25 x 79 feet project to the rear with a court between. The material is brick now painted white, with cast iron lintels over the openings. There is a monumental flight of marble steps leading to the main entrance on the South. The southern facade is of nine bays, the center three (3) of which are emphasized by a front piece of four (4) Ionic columns of wood, placed close to the facade, which support a heavy entablature and a pediment of of wood. The end bays on either end of this facade are emphasized by deep pilasters or piers over which the entablature is advanced. The entablature has been altered, most noticeably over the pilasters. The roof is hipped and the windows are double hung sash.

The majority of the structures erected at the school were of substantial masonry construction. Exterior and most interior walls were heavy brick masonry load-bearing walls, supporting rough-sawn timber floor joists.

A. Exterior: (cont'd)

(Basement floors, initially of timber joist construction, were eventually replaced by the present concrete floors.) The massive, low hipped and gable roofs were formed by heavy timber trusses with timber joists or purlins, and were sheathed with standing-seam metal roofing.

Masonry wall openings are framed by flat wood, cast iron or stone lintels, as well as by brick segmental or semicircular arches. The use of stone was generally limited to foundations for all buildings, and for lintels or stringcourses in later structures, as well as the main flight of stairs to the 1848 Administration Building.

B. Interior:

The Interior has a central hall 14 feet wide intersected by a cross hall 8 feet wide with a stairway at either end. There is a curving cantilevered stairway opposite the main entrance at the end of the central hall. The interior has been considerably altered for use as the City Hall.

The back detailing on the interiors consisted of wood floors; plaster walls and ceilings; some use of wood wainscots; windows, doors and their surrounds; and elegant stairways.

Heating for the school buildings was initially supplied by numerous fireplaces and stoves. A steam heating system was installed in 1884, and later replaced by a similar system in 1905.

While gas was installed in the buildings in 1857, no date has been uncovered for the first use of electricity. It might be assumed that this occurred early in Knoxville's electrical evolution, due to the schools's proximity to the downtown area.

The history of plumbing is more obscure. A number of cisterns are known to have existed around the main original buildings. Facilities for bathing are first mentioned in 1871 as being incorporated in a structure also used to store wood, coal and tools. In 1884 bathroom facilities for the boys appear to have been installed, although it was not until 1889-90 that a sewer system was constructed. A basement room of the East Wing was converted in 1899 to a bathroom for the small boys, with similar facilities being incorporated into the Small Boys' Cottage in 1903. A central laundry was important, and it was initially located in various rooms of the original buildings. It was housed in its own structure by 1889.

Provisions for fire protection in the form of fire plugs and hose lines were introduced in 1892, and by 1907 fire escapes were required. However, it was not until 1913 that a permanent water connection for the fire protection systems was completed.

C. Site:

The City Hall building is situated on a high wooded knoll overlooking Knoxville's Central Business District to the South and the site of the 1982 World's Fair to the Southeast. Dramatic effect was heightened by a careful terracing of the main lawn to the South of the main building. The center walk conforms to the terraces in its segments of stairs and level walks. This principal story, accessible by the wide marble stairs, an additional fifteen (15) feet higher, finalized the spatial hierarchy begun in the landscape with a dramatic entrance to the building itself.

The site itself is characterized by extensive lawn areas and several large deciduous trees. The site is bounded on its southern edge by a large stone retaining wall.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

(SEE ATTACHED APPENDIXES A, B, BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS.)

Prepared By: \*

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Department of Community and Economic Development  
City of Knoxville  
September 24, 1981

\* The majority of the information in this report was compiled from a study prepared by the architectural firms:

Ross Janney Hester Fowler P.C.

Building Conservation Technology, Inc. titled:

Knoxville City Hall Complex  
Adaptive Reuse Feasibility Study, January 2, 1980

## KNOXVILLE CITY HALL COMPLEX: LIST OF EXISTING BLUEPRINTS

The following list of drawings comes from the Knoxville City Engineer's Office and consists of floorplans of all buildings existing at the time the City acquired the property of the Tennessee School for the Deaf. These drawings illustrate room subdivisions prior to remodeling work by the City. All plans are 1/4" = 1'-0".

<u>Building:</u>	<u>Subject:</u>	
Site Plan	Gives existing buildings the numbers used below to identify them.	
1* .....	Basement Plan	
	First Floor Plan	
	Second Floor Plan	
2 .....	Basement	
	First Floor Plan	
	Second Floor Plan	
3 .....	Basement	
	First Floor Plan	
	Second and Third Floor Plan (combined)	
4 .....	Basement	
	First Floor Plan	
	Second Floor Plan	
5 .....	Basement	(No First Floor Plan)
	Second Floor Plan	
	Third Floor Plan	
6 .....	Basement	
	First Floor Plan	
	Second Floor Plan	
7 .....	First Floor Plan	(No Basement Plan)
	Second Floor Plan	
8* .....	First Floor Plan	
	Second Floor Plan	
9* .....	First Floor Plan	
10 .....	Basement	
	First Floor Plan	
	Second Floor Plan	
11* .....	First Floor Plan	
	Second Floor Plan	
12* .....	First Floor Plan	
	Second Floor Plan	

\*Buildings no longer existing



APPENDIX BKNOXVILLE CITY HALL COMPLEX: BARBER & McMURRAY DRAWINGS

The drawings in this set were prepared by Barber & McMurray for the remodeling of the old Tennessee School for the Deaf buildings. Their clients were the City of Knoxville and the Knoxville Board of Education.

<u>Sheet No.</u>	<u>Building</u>	<u>Floor Plan</u>	<u>Scale</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1*	B,1,2	1/8	7/17/24
	2	B,1,2,3	1/8	
2	3	B,1,2,3	1/8	7/18/24
	4	B,1,2	1/8	
3	6	1	1/8	7/18/24
	7	B,1,2	1/8	
	8*	1,2	1/8	
	9*	1	1/16	
	12*	1,2	1/8	
4	5	B,1,2,3	1/8	8/4/24
	6	2	1/8	
5	5	B	1/4	8/26/24
6	5	1	1/4	8/26/24
7	5	2	1/4	8/26/24
8	5	3	1/4	8/26/24
8F	6	B	1/4	8/28/24
9	6	2	1/4	9/6/24
5	10	B,1,2	1/8	8/6/24

\* Buildings no longer existing.

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